



# Accrington Spring Hill Community Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 119185  
**Local Authority** Lancashire  
**Inspection number** 291348  
**Inspection dates** 9–10 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** George Crowther

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Exchange Street
<b>School category</b>	Community		Accrington, Lancashire
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		BB5 0JD
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01254 399009
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	362	<b>Fax number</b>	01254 398962
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr Tom Haworth
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Stephanie Grimshaw
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 June 2001		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Spring Hill is a large primary school that serves an area of considerable social disadvantage. Pupils' attainment when they start school is well below average and, for some, very low. A high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much higher than in most schools. About 80 per cent of the pupils are from Pakistani backgrounds and a high proportion of these have very little English when they start school. Currently, about 20 pupils are at the very early stages of learning English, but a lack of fluent English affects adversely the learning of many pupils. Almost all the rest of the pupils are from White British backgrounds.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

Spring Hill provides a very happy, positive environment for learning where each pupil is valued highly. The local community holds the school in very high regard because it has raised the profile of education and involved parents, whatever their background. Over the last few years, however, leaders and managers have been too involved in developing the ethos of the school and have not placed enough emphasis on pupils' academic achievement. As a result, the progress pupils make in Years 3 to 6 is unsatisfactory because many pupils are not doing as well as they should. The current effectiveness of the school is inadequate. Leadership has already begun to tackle aspects of underachievement, which gives the school a satisfactory capacity to improve.

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the matters stated below.

Pupils are making satisfactory progress up to Year 2. In Years 3 to 6, however, too many pupils do not do well enough, even when taking into consideration those pupils who experience disruptions to their schooling. Weaknesses in the quality of teaching slow pupils' progress. For example, the lack of urgency in some lessons, and activities that are not challenging enough, prevent some pupils from making more rapid progress. The school checks on the progress pupils are making, but it does not have a rigorous system in place to set targets for the next steps in learning and to ensure they are met. Equally, leaders have not focused sufficiently on identifying and tackling underachievement.

Children's personal development is satisfactory and well supported by the school's very positive approach to encouraging enjoyment and healthy life styles. The pupils are very happy in school, but many find it hard to concentrate and really get on with their work. The more stimulating, active teaching helps these pupils to make good progress. Behaviour is good. Despite the school's determined efforts, attendance is too low. The quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection varied from good to inadequate but it is inadequate overall. In Years 3 to 6, over time, the quality of teaching is not enabling many pupils to make sufficient progress. The curriculum is satisfactory. Satisfactory provision in the Foundation Stage ensures that children make a confident start at school.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. A hallmark of the headteacher's leadership is her affinity with the local community, the children, and their families. Many of the prerequisites for boosting pupils' achievement are already in place at this school, but leadership and management have not focused rigorously enough on checking on and raising pupils' achievement. All the staff team, and the governors, recognise that this needs to be remedied as a matter of urgency.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve pupils' progress during Years 3 to 6.
- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good or better, particularly in Years 3 to 6.
- Encourage pupils' achievement by making them more aware of their existing skills and setting challenging targets for improvement.
- Ensure that pupils' progress is checked rigorously so that potential underachievement is identified and tackled.
- Adopt more systematic procedures for leaders and managers to check on and improve the work of the school.
- Increase attendance.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory and not as good as the school's evaluation. Many pupils start school with weak skills. They make a positive start in the Reception classes, including those at an early stage of learning English, but, by the time they join Year 1, standards are still well below average. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2, building their basic skills steadily, but the results of national tests at the end of Year 2 are significantly below average, as are current standards. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' progress is unsatisfactory because there is too little emphasis on making sure each pupil does as well as possible, academically, and there are weaknesses in the quality of teaching. As a result, too many are underachieving although for some pupils progress is satisfactory or better. Measures of pupils' progress from Year 3 to Year 6, based on national test results, are much worse than for most schools. In 2005, progress was in the bottom ten per cent of schools nationally and very weak for English. For the past five years, results in the Year 6 national tests have been significantly below average. In 2006, the school did not meet its targets, but the progress of these pupils was better than the year before, which shows the school is beginning to tackle the problem. Some pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress but, in Years 3 to 6, this group of pupils could make better progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

The pupils enjoy being at school and parents say this gives children the confidence to do their best. One pupil said 'The teachers make lessons fun by having lots of interesting stuff to do', which explains why, for the most part, pupils are keen to learn. Many pupils, however, find it difficult to concentrate on their work and there is often a lack of urgency about getting things done. The pupils behave well. Relationships between pupils and with teachers are positive, as seen when Year 5 pupils thrived on the teacher's praise for their mathematical skills. Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good. A rich range of experiences, such as finding out about religions, develops pupils' understanding of themselves and their place in the wider

world. Despite the school's determined efforts, attendance is too low because a small number of pupils are absent too often, and some take extended holidays in Pakistan.

Pupils develop a satisfactory sense of their own well-being. They know how to make healthy choices in the food they eat and the exercise they take. They say 'You have to eat lots of fruit if you want to be healthy'. The pupils feel safe at school because, if they have a problem, they are confident they can talk to an adult. Class jobs and special responsibilities for the older pupils, such as reading with the younger ones, give pupils an understanding of contributing to the community. This is reinforced by strong links with the local community. The low level of attainment many pupils reach does not equip them well for later life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 4**

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate, and not as good as the school's evaluation. In the reception classes, Year 1 and Year 2, satisfactory teaching builds the pupils' skills steadily. In Years 3 to 6, however, the quality of teaching has weaknesses or is inadequate in too many lessons. Where teaching is good, lessons are planned carefully and the pupils understand clearly what they are expected to learn. Teachers capture pupils' interest and expect them to work hard either on their own or in groups. Where teaching has weaknesses, whole-class sessions last too long, and they do not involve the pupils sufficiently, so opportunities are lost to develop vital speaking and listening skills. Expectations of how quickly the pupils should work are too low and, as a result, pupils lack urgency in their learning. Work is not always pitched at the right level to get the best from all pupils, and especially the more able, so they do not make enough progress. Teaching assistants usually provide good support for pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In some lessons, however, their good skills are not used well enough.

Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and give good praise and encouragement. In Years 3 to 6, however, teachers do not provide enough comments to indicate how pupils can improve their work. Assessment is used satisfactorily to check on pupils' progress, but making pupils aware of their current attainment, and setting targets for future learning, are inconsistent across the school and are not having sufficient impact on pupils' achievement.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school follows national guidance, but adapts the work to meet the challenging needs of many pupils, for example by placing additional emphasis on developing writing skills. The curriculum is carefully planned and organised. A great strength of the school is the way it recognises each pupil's needs, and this ensures that all pupils have full access to the range of learning opportunities. Pupils

with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have an appropriate curriculum and are well supported. The personal, social and health education programme is effective, particularly in developing pupils' confidence and self-worth. Pupils are taught how to stay safe and about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. The use of information and communication technology to support learning is developing, but is not yet consistent across the school. Pupils are well prepared socially for the next stage of their education and very strong links with local high schools assist smooth transition. A range of extra-curricular activities takes place before school and at lunchtimes and pupil participation is good. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of special visitors and visits, for example to places of worship.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 4**

Levels of care are good. Many pupils need extra support because of difficulties in their lives. All the staff work hard to ensure each pupil is safe, happy and ready to learn. The Learning Mentor plays a key role in supporting vulnerable pupils, and the school has effective links with a range of outside agencies. The pupils feel safe and cared for in school because, as one pupil said 'The teachers are kind and they help you if you need it'. This confidence in the care staff provide makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Procedures for safeguarding learners, in terms of the adults who work in school meet government requirements. Support and guidance for pupils' academic progress is inadequate, particularly during Years 3 to 6. This weakness led inspectors to rate this aspect less favourably than the school's evaluation. Pupils' academic progress is monitored frequently, but the information is not used well enough to ensure that each pupil is doing as well as possible. Pupils are not given enough guidance about their current level of attainment and what they need to do to reach a higher, more challenging level. The use of learning targets is patchy.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher's leadership, well supported by the staff, has created a school where all the pupils are equally respected, and all are enabled to play a full part in school life, regardless of background or ability. She cares passionately about the pupils' welfare. Everyone works to promote pupils' self-confidence, security and positive attitudes to learning. Links with families and the local community are strong and the school goes to considerable lengths to support families and involve parents in the education of their children. As a result, parents and others in the local community have a very high regard for the school.

Systems and frameworks to promote academic progress and achievement, however, are not good enough and leadership has not been sufficiently focused on raising standards. The school's self-evaluation before the inspection judged some inadequate aspects of its work to be satisfactory, placing too little emphasis on weaknesses in pupils' achievement. Nonetheless, leadership and management have a clear

understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have correctly identified that raising standards is the priority. The school, in association with the local authority, has already put in place a number of initiatives, such as more careful monitoring of pupils' progress, but these have yet to have a sufficient impact on standards. The group of pupils who left the school in 2006, however, showed signs of better achievement.

Governance is satisfactory. The governors provide strong support for the school and have a good understanding of the ways in which it cares for pupils. Their understanding of how pupils' achievement may be improved is not as perceptive. Finances and resources are well managed, but the school does not provide satisfactory value for money because pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

The school has made insufficient progress since the last inspection in raising standards. It has coped very well with the move to a new building and the integration of pupils from three separate sites. The very positive work done in creating an appropriate ethos for the new school, however, has overshadowed the drive to raise standards. The school now has a renewed focus on raising standards, clear priorities for action, and a determination, which combine to give a satisfactory capacity to make the necessary improvements.





## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	4
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	4

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Accrington Spring Hill Community Primary School

Exchange Street

Accrington

Lancashire

BB5 0JD

13 November 2006

Dear Children

We visited your school last week to find out if it is giving you the education you should receive. Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for being so helpful when we asked you questions. We think there are lots of good things about your school, but we also discovered that some of you are not making as much progress as you could. Here are the strengths we found:

- you enjoy being at school and you are well behaved
- your school is a friendly place where everyone gets on well together
- your parents like the school because the teachers get to know you really well
- you are positive about your school and your learning, which helps you to do well in many lessons
- you said most lessons are fun and you enjoy the activities
- your school is a caring place and you said the staff look after you well
- the Year 5 and 6 buddies do a good job helping the younger children
- you enjoy all the activities outside lessons, particularly visits to special places.

We would like you to work with your teachers to improve the way you learn.

- In Years 3 to 6, some of you are not making as much progress as you could. We have asked your teachers to make sure that the work you are given in lessons is just right so that you have to think hard, but you can get on quickly. You will need to concentrate on your work and do your best.
- Many of you already have learning targets to help you know what you need to do to improve your work. We have asked your teachers to use targets even more so that you can make the next step in your learning as soon as possible.
- The teachers need to spot when you are not learning as quickly as you could and make sure you get the help you need.
- Some children have too many days off school. These children need to be at school all the time so they can get the best from their learning.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection of your school.

Yours sincerely

George CrowtherChris PenterJoe Clark

Lead InspectorInspectorInspector